

A MONTH IN THE MOON

A Serial Story of Remarkable Experiences.

By A. LAURIE.

Marvelous Experience That Grew Out of the Lunar Company, Limited—How the Catchpenny Scheme of Three Adventurers Was Transformed Into an Extraordinary Contribution to the World of Science—Scenes and Incidents of a Sojourn on the Earth's Satellite.

CONTINUED FROM LAST SUNDAY.

SYNOPSIS OF PREVIOUS CHAPTERS PUBLISHED.

Messrs. Gryphins, Vogel, and Wagner, the three unscrupulous agents of the Electric Transmission Company, of Melbourne, Australia, being down to their last dollar, receive an unexpected windfall in the shape of a sale of fifty shares of stock for cash to one Tyrrel Smith, valet to Sir Bucephalus Coghill. With this nest egg in hand, Wagner, who is something of a scientist, conceives the idea of starting the Lunar Company, for the conquest and exploration of the mineral riches of the moon.

The scheme is extensively advertised and shares of stock are eagerly snapped up. "But how are we to get to the moon?" is the natural question asked by large numbers of these stockholders, and at last a public meeting is called, and Wagner, whose sole object has been to get money, undertakes to satisfy the clamor. He talks learnedly of a tubular tunnel, but has his theory utterly demolished by Norbert Mauny, a young Frenchman, who declares that in order to complete such a piece of work within the stipulated time of five years it must rise at the rate of 20,000 miles a year!

The assemblage is panic-stricken, and the stockholders demand their money back, when Mauny calls for order and announces that he has a plan to propose. Quiet is restored, and then the young Frenchman proceeds to explain a scheme he has had in mind for some time, but has lacked capital to carry it out—that of attracting the moon to the earth by erecting a series of powerful magnets in a country especially adapted to such a design. The idea is received with enthusiasm, and Mauny is voted manager of the company, with Sir Bucephalus Coghill as his associate. The Bayoula desert, in the Sudan, is selected as the site for the erection of the magnets. The expedition, of which Gryphins, Vogel, and Wagner are also members, sets out in the steamer Dover Castle, and seven months after the formation of the company reaches Suakin. Here Mauny meets the French consul, M. Kersain, and his daughter Gertrude, who decide to accompany him on a visit to the Magdalen of Rhadameh, a local ruler whose favor must be obtained before the transportation of the material across the desert can be made.

The Magdalen is a weird sort of personage, and possesses a hideously ugly dwarf, whose eyes shoot fire from behind his glasses when he sees the party from Suakin approaching. After promising to pay certain large sums as tribute, Norbert secures the co-operation he desires.

Leaving Suakin they proceed to the peak of Tehballi, which is composed of iron pyrites, and which it is proposed to insulate and turn into an enormous magnet. The work under the direction of Norbert progresses rapidly. He makes a zig-zag road to the summit, on which he erects coils, laboratories, and dwellings. By a liberal expenditure of money he gets all the labor he requires.

One day he is surprised to receive a visit from M. Kersain, who has been appointed consul general at Khartoum. He is on his way accompanied by his daughter and his brother-in-law, Dr. Briet. Dr. Briet explains the technical details of his scheme. He gets his power from solar heat, and is constructing an insulating plate of glass from the desert sand beneath the peak. Enormous dynamos will then convert the heat into a magnet, which will attract the moon near enough to the earth to be reached by balloons or otherwise.

After the departure of the visitors, Messrs. Gryphins, Vogel, and Wagner are detected in a conspiracy to turn the works against Norbert. They are imprudent and a guard placed over them, and then Norbert, hearing that trouble threatens Khartoum, where Mr. Kersain is now settled, determines to go thither to see if he can induce him and his daughter to take refuge at the peak.

The consul refuses to leave his post, but it is finally arranged that Gertrude, accompanied by her uncle, Dr. Briet, and her maid Fatima, set out with Norbert for Tehballi. On the road they meet a woman fruit seller, and shortly after eating some of her fruit a deep sleep falls on all members of the party. On awaking, Gertrude finds she is in a strange but beautiful apartment, with only Fatima, who sleeps near her. But presently the hideous dwarf of the Magdalen of Rhadameh presents himself and offers his hand in marriage, announcing himself as Kaddour the Magician, and performing a number of marvels, which, however, fail to impress her. He then determines to march with his forces to the peak, taking the prisoners with him, and there decide before their very eyes the work on which Norbert Mauny has built such high hopes. But Norbert Mauny has been employed by the young astronomer and those in the service of the dwarf come from the same district, and they refuse to fight against one another. Kaddour is taken prisoner and placed in charge of Virgil, Mauny's valet, and his guards.

Kaddour, by means of his Oriental magic, succeeds in causing disaffection in the garrison, and is condemned to death, but cheats the executioner by swallowing some poison concealed in his finger ring. He is buried in a cave, which is closed by a large stone. Some of the workmen attempt to destroy the furnace, and are summarily discharged. An envoy of the Magdalen demands the surrender of the peak. He is dismissed, threatening dire vengeance. The Chacoula then decide to depart, leaving the place defended by Kaddour the Magician, and offering tribute to the Magdalen. The peak being not completely insulated, he turns on the dynamos. Each night the moon grows larger and larger, until it fills the heavens, proving that all the signs are correct and that the satellite is near the point of contact. He explains to the baronet how he could, by pressing two knobs, reverse the action. Whereupon Smith, the baronet's valet, presses the knobs. There is a fearful crash, in which all are rendered temporarily unconscious. When they come to they find themselves in the midst of a new and strange landscape, apparently of a volcanic nature.

Norbert discovers that the peak, which he had insulated from the earth, had been covered bodily by magnetic attraction to the moon, and that all the signs they have contained in the building and in the crater of the volcano Rheticus, on which the peak sits as a cap. He leaves Sir Bucephalus to stop up an opening through which the air is escaping and hastens for reinforcements. Wearing respirators, the party starts forth, and find that, owing to the lack of atmospheric pressure, they are enabled to make tremendous leaps and to lift enormous weights.

CHAPTER XXX.

A STRANGE INTRUSION.

HERE a painful surprise awaited them. The baronet was not there, although a large heap of stones attested the ardor with which he must have worked.

Norbert, thinking that he might have gone to get a few mouthfuls of fresh air, in the crater, penetrated farther in, calling him loudly.

The subterranean echoes alone replied.

Considerably alarmed, he lit several matches in succession, and began an exploration of the hole; but he had not gone ten paces before the uselessness of the proceeding came home to him.

The hollow interior of the crater descended in a gentle slope, so that there was no fear of a dangerous fall. On the other hand, Sir Bucephalus could not have ventured on a useless exploration without a light.

It seemed, therefore, certain that he was on the crater, and he must in all probability have been tempted to visit one of the neighboring valleys.

"Sir Bucephalus is not there," said Norbert to Smith, who had followed him anxiously. "You had better go and see if you can find him. Meanwhile we will commence work here, for there is not a minute to lose, and every instant's delay costs us much precious air."

Smith obeyed, and rest set to work vigorously.

Virgil had already deposited the water and cement in a hole dug with the shovel, and, mixing the cement, he now laid it on the wall that was rapidly rising under Norbert's hands. The doctor picked up the stones, and Gertrude and Fatima passed them with a hearty laugh at their own unaccustomed strength.

"Look," said Gertrude, holding out a rock that would have weighed a ton on the earth. "Is this little stone of any use to you?"

The work proceeded as rapidly as if Titans were the builders.

In a few minutes the wall reached to the foot of Tehballi, and as the plaster solidified at once on account of the extreme dryness, their task was completed.

Smith came back then and signified by heartbroken gestures that he had not found the baronet.

After an instant's reflection Norbert resolved to give the signal to return to the observatory.

"Perhaps," he thought, "Sir Bucephalus may have gone by another route, or he may be back soon."

There was no baronet to be seen in the drawing room, as they had hoped, but there were traces of his appetite. The lunch left on the table was half gone. Cold meat, ham, wine, biscuits and dessert had all been laid under contribution.

In truth, Sir Bucephalus could not have eaten all that had disappeared. He must have taken some of it away with him.

"I dare say," said the doctor, "that finding something interesting at the foot of the mountain, he hurried back to it at once."

The explanation seemed plausible, and was accepted by the company in default of any other solution. They took their seats at the table without further delay.

"Well, we are glad to have found a good supply of air in that cave," said the doctor, when he had somewhat satisfied his appetite. "But how will you manage to utilize it, my dear Mauny, now that, like another Eolus, you have succeeded in imprisoning it in your cavern? Do you intend to send us there for change of air now and then, just as I used to pack my patients off to Monte Carlo in those happy days when I did not practice on the moon? Or do you mean to put the air into barrels and transport it here?"

"My plan is much simpler," answered Norbert. "You know that I began by boring a well down the middle of the mountain. If the bottom of the well is put into communication with the air reservoir and a ventilator fitted to one of these windows, the whole of the observatory will have a sufficient supply."

"It is a good idea. But are you not afraid of being too generous with that precious air? Would it not be more prudent to restrain the supply to what is absolutely necessary by passing it through rubber or leaden tubes furnished with a tap? The tube would have to be of a considerable length, though, and probably you have not got such a thing in store."

"We have all that we require," replied Norbert.

"There has not been much to complain of hitherto," said the doctor. "But it is really painful not to be able to exchange one's thoughts outside this observatory! A bright idea occurred to me a little while ago. Why shouldn't we learn the deaf and dumb language?"

"Where shall we find its alphabet?" said Norbert. "I own that I never thought of providing that, and perhaps the omission was a mistake on my part."

"Perhaps we can devise a substitute," rejoined the doctor. "I used to know it pretty well, once upon a time, and it is much easier than is generally supposed. One has only to remember the conventional finger signs that stand for the twenty-four letters of the alphabet; it is much easier for us than for poor children who have never had their sight or hearing, and do not know their letters. See? This is how the letter A is shown."

The doctor proceeded to teach them all

the other letters of the alphabet in succession. He took out his notebook and drew the signs of it in pencil.

"I don't know how it is," he resumed, "but it is a curious fact that a little thing of this sort sometimes remains for years in a corner of the memory, much like a bundle of letters in an old drawer, and is ready for use when occasion offers. We must have fresh signs if I have forgotten any."

They all proved good pupils, and gestulated in praiseworthy concert. Norbert, glancing at Virgil, thought that even he was trying to learn the mute language. The soldier stood on the threshold of the office gestulating wildly.

But on a sudden his master saw that his signs were genuine attempts to attract notice. He was blinking his eyes and making despairing gestures from behind Gertrude's chair, as if to intimate to his master that he had something serious and special to communicate to him in private and as soon as possible.

Norbert gave him a look to show that he understood and left the table soon after, pretending that he had to take the time of a chronometer in the Hall of Telescopes.

"There are thieves here, sir," Virgil whispered.

"Thieves? What do you mean?"

"I have just found the storeroom quite demolished. The canned goods, biscuits, sugar, coffee, everything is gone! We have been robbed of tons. Everything is upset, the drawers left open and the cases empty on the floor. One would think a troop of Arabs must have been there. And it was all done while we were at the foot of the Peak. For I was the last to leave the storeroom with a barrel of water, and I find it in this state on my return!"

"Might it not have been done by Sir Bucephalus?"

"Sir Bucephalus? He couldn't have carried off all that is missing! It must have been the work of eight or ten men, depend upon it. Besides, Sir Bucephalus has not been in, I think, and he has not touched the lunch table."

"What makes you think so?"

"Everything. The way in which the ham is cut, the meats hacked about, so unlike the orderly, methodical habits of the English. We servants notice these little matters. And, then he has a good appetite, certainly, but he could not have eaten such a lot! Besides, his dinner napkin has not been unfolded and his plate is quite clean. No, no, believe me, sir, Sir Bucephalus has not been in."

"But what do you infer?"

"I don't know. I can only think that thieves have been here within the last hour or half-hour, and they have carried off not only an enormous quantity of provisions, but also—"

"What?"

"Arms and ammunition! My rifle, which stood behind the door of the storeroom, and the doctor's rifle that was hanging up in the drawing-room. He has not noticed its absence, but I did."

CHAPTER XXXI.

ONLY CATALEPSY.

After ascertaining the state of things in the storeroom and finding that Virgil had in no wise exaggerated, Norbert called Briet into the Hall of Telescopes to take counsel with him and his faithful servant.

Who were these strange thieves that they should pounce upon the provisions and leave the baronet's splendid plate untouched? That circumstance alone seemed to point to the probability of the theft having been committed by an animal, or a troop of unknown animals, rather than by a human being.

On the other hand, the disappearance of the firearms must have been the work of intelligent though mischievous beings. Anyhow, it was most important to find out the truth, and also to organize a search party for the baronet.

As the expedition had its dangers, it was settled that Gertrude and Fatima should be left behind in charge of Smith. The doctor and Virgil, armed to the teeth, accompanied Norbert.

The model valet was told of this decision, and strictly enjoined not to disquiet the ladies left to his protection, as they were not to know the reason of the sortie. He was, however, to lock the door and to have loaded firearms at hand, and not to admit anyone without good cause.

Having taken these precautions, our three explorers hastened to equip themselves for the adventure. Then they bade good-by to Gertrude under pretext of going out to look for the baronet.

"Where shall we begin?" asked the doctor.

"I am inclined to go toward the Sea of Serenity," replied Norbert.

"The sea?" cried Fatima, clapping her hands. "Oh, how I should like to see it, and, above all, to bathe in it, as at Suakin!"

"Don't be in such a hurry, Fatima,"

said Norbert. "There is no water in the sea."

"No water in a sea?"

"No, my child; there is not a drop on the whole surface of the moon, nor even in its atmosphere. We should suffer terribly from thirst if we had not a good supply in store, which saves us at least that torment. As to the sea of which I speak, it is, like all the others in this world, simply a sandy plain."

"Then why call them seas?" asked Gertrude.

"Because the first astronomers who discovered them, a hundred and fifty or two hundred years ago, took them for seas, as in conformation they much resemble the probable appearance of the beds of our oceans, supposing the water had dried up. But I will tell you more about it on our return, as I shall certainly take the opportunity of studying the question more closely than has yet been done."

"Well, go quickly in that case," said Gertrude, "or you will be overtaken by night; for it must now be 2 or 3 o'clock in the afternoon. I can't tell exactly, because all our clocks and watches have stopped."

"There is no fear of night coming," said Norbert, laughing. "Unless I am very much out in my calculations, we can look forward to something like 264 hours of daylight."

"It is possible? Are the days so long as that in the moon?"

"They last at least fourteen times twenty-four hours. There are only twelve days throughout the lunar year."

"And are we not to sleep during all that period?" asked Fatima, in dismay.

"Nothing prevents our sleeping. In fact, we must make a point of having fixed hours for repose, on account of our terrestrial habits. We must sleep in the daytime, that is all."

"And will the nights, when they come, be equally long?"

"Quite. During fourteen times twenty-four hours we shall only have the light of the stars and of the earth."

"How strange it will be!" cried Fatima.

"Not stranger than the long polar nights and days in the Arctic regions of the terrestrial globe. But meanwhile we must proceed to our exploration. Come, doctor, let us start. Virgil, have your maps, compass, barometers, and all necessaries!"

"Yes, sir."

"One word more," implored the doctor. "How will the barometer behave here?"

"Just as it does on earth, or nearly so. That enables us to keep our provision of air, and go about with impunity in the rarefied atmosphere of the moon."

"If it is so rarefied, how is it that the barometric tension is the same as that to which we are used?"

"The lunar atmosphere is much higher than that of the earth. That accords with the lesser intensity of the weight of the surface of this world, and explains how it is that the lunar atmosphere is invisible from the earth. All the facts fit in. But enough! Let us go now, once for all."

They went down the road and the slope of the great crater, and were soon in the plain strewn with smaller volcanoes. They crossed without stopping, and in going toward the south-west, came before long to the edge of a vast sand bed.

It extended to the horizon, and as the young astronomer had foreseen, was exactly like the Sahara, with the exception, however, that no oasis was visible, and the solar light was more intense than in the African desert.

Had there been a single individual, alive or dead, throughout this vast expanse, he would have been seen ten leagues off. But not the least vestige or animate or inanimate life disturbed the solitude.

"Let us go back and look in the Apennines," wrote Norbert, passing his note book to his companions.

The great chain of mountains stretched from northwest to west. It was composed of ranges of peaks, rising to the height of ten thousand feet above the Sea of Serenity. Mauny, Dr. Briet and Virgil accomplished the first part of the ascent in less than an hour. It was not very easy walking, but the three travelers explored it thoroughly, climbing manfully terrace after terrace, until at length they stood on a summit whence they commanded a view of both slopes quite sixty leagues in extent.

Vainly did they sweep the immense circle with their glasses. The solitude was as complete as the bottom of the dried up lunar ocean.

Norbert had just lowered the glass and was about to give the signal to return, when his attention was caught by a pyramidal rock surmounting the height on which he stood. He went up to it. It had evidently been placed there by a human hand.

It was rough, but was wedged carefully in, and propped up with stones to prevent it rocking. And to obviate all doubt as to its origin, the following inscription,

done with a knife, was to be seen on one side:

SIR BUCEPHALUS COGHILL,
The First Man
That Ever Climbed These
Mountains.

"Well, to be sure!" said Norbert, laughing, as he pointed out the inscription to the doctor. "It was to write his name here, then, that the baronet gave us all the slip. We shall find him safe and sound, depend upon it, when we return. Who would have accused him of such a freak of vanity?"

With their minds at rest the three explorers set off homeward down a new road. It was a kind of deep gorge, that led straight to the crater of Rheticus, and was probably the bed of some ancient torrent that had forced its way to the sea.

It was shady and cool, and, best of all, they could actually hear the sound of their own footsteps, which showed that they must have hit upon a stratum of air.

Norbert hastened to verify the fact by taking off his oxygen respirator. But he had to put it on again quickly. The floating modicum of air was not of sufficient density for animal life.

On the other hand, there was no trace of vegetable existence. The stratum of air was probably a remnant of the earth's atmosphere that had been imprisoned in these depths. So reasoned Norbert.

The ancient torrent skirted the base of Rheticus, and consequently that also of Tehballi, and brought them back to the observatory on the opposite side from that by which they had left it. They seized the opportunity of inspecting that part of the peak.

As they passed along the road that ran past the tomb of the dwarf of Rhadameh, a most unexpected sight met their eyes:

The stone closing the tomb had fallen down, and the corpse lay exposed to view in the hollow of the rock where it had been deposited.

Norbert and Virgil instinctively turned away from the sight and began to lift up the stone in order to replace it. But the doctor went up to the body and examined it with scientific curiosity.

All at once he stooped, took the dead man's hand, and looked intently at a red patch on it that appeared to have been the effect of the sun's heat.

Turning back to his companions, and seeing that they were evidently surprised, the doctor wrote on a page of his notebook:

"A corpse burned by the sun! Such a thing was never yet seen! It is too preposterous, even in the moon!"

Norbert was aware of the physiological truth that there is no more certain sign of death than the fact that the skin is insensible to burning.

The doctor took up his stethoscope and put it to the dead man's chest.

Alas! He suddenly bethought himself that there was no sound on the moon, and therefore the absence of all noise in the heart was no proof. So he hastened to uncover the wizened wrist and felt it with the palm of his own hand.

There was a very feeble pulsation, scarcely perceptible, but still unmistakable.

Before Norbert and Virgil, who stood by, lost in amazement, could make out what the doctor was about, he caught up the dwarf as if he had been a baby and ran with him to the observatory.

The doctor passed quickly through the Hall of Motors, and rushing to his room, laid the dwarf on his own bed, and actually went to work to scrub him vigorously from head to foot with a clothes brush.

At the same time he inflated the lungs of the supposed corpse by blowing down a silver tube which he had taken out of his surgical case and inserted in Kaddour's mouth, having first, with his forefingers, pulled forward the singularly shriveled tongue.

Norbert saw the dwarf slowly coming back to life. His breathing became stronger, and he twisted and turned, coughed and sneezed under the brisk manipulation of the brush, which left him as red as a boiled lobster.

At last he opened his eyes, and faintly murmured in French:

"Something to drink."

Norbert wondered if he were in a dream. Yet there was no room to doubt. There, before his very eyes, was the dwarf of Rhadameh, who had been buried fifteen days back, now all alive, speaking like anyone else!

The doctor was too busy to be spoken to. After he had well rubbed his patient, he made him breathe pure oxygen, and poured half a glass of wine down his throat. Exhausted with his hard work, the worthy man then swallowed a bumper himself, and wiped his forehead with a self-satisfied air.

"At last!" cried Norbert, no longer able to suppress his impatience. "Will you explain this mystery?"

"Explain it? Nothing simpler," said the doctor, laughing. "This is a case of catalepsy. I have long known that certain Indian jugglers and fakirs do it, but I have never before had an opportunity of witnessing the phenomenon. I am very glad to have seen it. You are witness that the fellow bore all the appearance of death, and was buried for how long?"

"Thirteen days, unless I mistake."

"That is less than the fakir of Ceylon

mentioned to Dr. Sterk as having been buried for six months."

"Six months or six days is much the same," said Norbert, "for the phenomenon is as extraordinary in the one case as the other. How is it accounted for?"

"By a most simple process of progression. The Indian fakirs and jugglers begin by accustoming themselves to live with the minimum of vital force, through their habit of remaining motionless for long periods of time. They practice holding their breath; they live in boxes that are more or less hermetically sealed, first for hours, then for days, and finally for weeks or months."

"More than that, they manage to fill their stomachs, as if it were a storeroom, with atmospheric air that they can afterward pass into their lungs by minute doses at a time. To effect this, the string of their tongue is cut, so that they can turn it back and close their windpipe at will. They know how to hypnotize themselves by looking fixedly at the top of their nose; and by contracting the thoracic muscles they can so stop the movement of the heart that it is imperceptible. They also have poisons in their possession that are unknown to the European pharmacy, and that can produce all the aforesaid effects instantaneously. You see how easily all these combined agents can simulate the appearance of death."

Norbert listened to these explanations with deep interest, but his interest was nothing compared to that of Kaddour. He was quite himself again, and was now taking in, with wide open eyes and ears, every word of the doctor.

The latter at last perceived this and dropped the subject for the present, reserving it for the drawing room, when the person principally concerned should not be at hand.

"Well, my boy," he said, patting the dwarf on the head, affectionately and professionally, "we are certainly much better. But there must be no more of these pranks, because they would not answer nor take us in now! Virgil will give you a cup of soup presently, with a glass of claret. After that you must take a nap, and wake up quite well."

Really, to hear the doctor speak, one would have thought that he was addressing the most virtuous and charming patient, instead of a wicked deformed fellow, who had barely escaped a well merited capital sentence by feigning to poison himself. But such is the strength of the medical sense of what is fitting in the practice of the profession, that every other consideration is lost in the single-minded care for the patient, and rich or poor, honest man or criminal, are all one in their eyes so long as they need a doctor.

And such is the strength of example that everyone in the observatory acted likewise. They all forgot the crimes of Kaddour, and only looked upon him first as a singular phenomenon, then, after some hours had passed by, as a brother in misfortune, another exile from earth.

Everyone hastened to show him little attentions as soon as he was able to rise and go into the Hall of Telescopes, where a hammock was slung for him.

The dwarf was morosely silent at first, and did not apparently appreciate their kindness. The doctor alone seemed to find grace in his eyes, and he appeared glad to hear his voice.

But when he saw the genial sympathy was real, and not affected—when he understood that his crimes were forgiven, and that he was treated like a friend—he was so overcome at last by so much generosity that one day he gave proof of the fact by bursting into tears.

This proved the signal for a complete change in his manners and conduct. He did not speak any more, but his old expression of morose defiance gave place to one of sadness, of almost gentleness. It was evident that a chord had been touched in that hard heart.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE HISTORY OF KADDOUR.

Little by little the dwarf expanded in this atmosphere of benevolence. But no one could draw a word from him except Briet, who rallied him about his feats of magic.

Then Kaddour, smiling faintly, would condescend to answer in the same strain, as if speaking to another soothsayer. On these occasions he often evinced a marvelous amount of general knowledge.

They were all much struck by this fact. "The fellow," said Briet, "is a perfect mine of knowledge—a veritable cyclopaedia. Physics and chemistry, physiology, mathematics, natural history, medicines, living languages, military art—nothing comes amiss to him, and he seems to have gone to the bottom of everything. I am always wondering where he got it all, and I long to ask him; but something or other stops me."

"That is only natural," said Gertrude; "you only feel that, after saving the life of the poor wretch, it would not become you to ask for his history in return, as it were."

"That's it! But," he added, laughing, "it is not that only; I have a vague presentiment that I might be regaled with a yarn, did I venture to ask."

Perhaps the doctor was right on this point. Anyhow, notwithstanding the change that had come over the dwarf, there seemed to be a load upon his mind, preventing him from being at his ease.

A fortunate circumstance soon furnished the clue, however. Talking before Kaddour